Internal debt

†*352. SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH 'LALAN':
SHRI RAM JETHMALANI:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that as compared to the last year an increase in the amount of internal debt on Government has been estimated in the current financial year;

(b) if so, the estimate of total amount of debt at present; and

(c) the reasons for increase in the amount of this debt this year?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) and (b) The internal debt of the Government is estimated at Rs. 804528 crore in RE 2000-2001 as against Rs. 714254 crore in 1999-2000.

(c) Increased domestic borrowings are mainly due to finance the gap in resources of the Government.

Setting-up of a Communications Commission

*353. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to set-up Communications Commission of India;

(b) if so, by when it is likely to be set up; and

(c) what will be the powers and functions of the Commission?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) to (c) In terms of the draft of the proposed Communications Convergence Bill, which is presently under consideration of the Group on Telecom and IT Convergence constituted by the Government under the Chairmanship of the Finance Minister, it is proposed to establish a single autonomous and statutory body to be known as the Communications Commission of India to regulate the carriage and content of communications (including telecommunications, broadcasting and multimedia). As per the proposals in the draft Bill, the Commission would, *inter-alia*, be empowered to issue licences, determine licence fees and tariffs for licensed services, allot spectrum, facilitate competition, protect consumer interests.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

The Report of the Group on Telecom & IT Convergence in this regard is, however, awaited.

Private participation in Internet Telephony

*354. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are considering to legalise Internet Telephony as it will be a low cost alternative for domestic and international long distance calls in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the private entrepreneurs can also enter into Internet Telephony; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) to (d) While at present, in accordance with the New Telecom Policy (NTP-99), Internet Telephony is not permitted, Government is also required under this policy to monitor technological innovations and their impact on national development and review this issue at an appropriate time. Accordingly, Government have constituted an Expert Group to review the matter. The report of the Groups is awaited.

Financing of private sector projects by OIDB

*355. DR. A.K. PATEL: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether OIDB's charter permit them to finance projects implemented by private sector companies;

(b) if so, the names of the private sector companies which have received financing from OIDB;

(c) the details of pending applications with OIDB from private sector companies for financing their projects; and

(d) whether Government are averse to OIDB financing projects by private sector companies who are committing large resources for Indian Oil sector?